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ADDITIONAL NOTICES.

(Printed by order of Council.)

1.—*Exploration in the Neighbourhood of the Norman River Settlement, in the Gulf of Carpentaria.* BY W. LANDSBOROUGH.

(Communicated by J. S. LAURIE, Esq.)

February 17th, 1868.—I left Sweer's Island in the *Pioneer* steamer at five o'clock on the evening of the 17th February, 1868, for the Norman River settlement. We had a fine night; the steamer was very comfortable; and on the following morning, having steamed 70 miles, I saw in the distance the mouths of the Norman River, named by Dr. Leichhardt the Yappar. The water from recent floods was nearly fresh for at least three miles from the land. At seven in the evening we anchored for the night at a place 30 miles up the river, and 20 miles from the settlement.

19th.—This morning, the 19th, the schooner *Lily* passed down the river on her way to Sweer's Island, with the wind and tide in her favour. Her master, Captain Winthrop Ellis, reported that the people were all well at the Norman settlement.

Since yesterday afternoon, the tide continued strong against us. Weighed anchor at 9 A.M., and arrived early in the afternoon at the settlement. This new settlement is on a fine high gravelly ridge. The finest hotel in the district of Burke has been built on its summit. There are several other buildings, and there are about forty residents, which is nearly as many as there are at Carnarvon (Sweer's Island), or at the oldest settlement, Burke-town. The people seemed tolerably healthy, and were most sanguine of the settlement becoming the most thriving place on the main land of the district.

20th.—Mr. Phillips, the government surveyor, and I rode out to see the site which Mr. Sharkey, the Crown Lands Commissioner, had chosen for his office, and we afterwards tried to go along the road to the Chinaman's Garden, at a place called the Four-Mile Swamp, but the country was so soft from the recent wet weather, that we had to return without accomplishing our task. There was no wind, and the mosquitoes were so troublesome all day, that one's two hands were required to keep them off. At night it was impossible to sleep without the finest curtains.

23rd.—At five in the morning of the 23rd, I accompanied Mr. Phillips to explore the Wills, a creek which joins the Norman River 25 miles below the township; hitherto it was considered to be Dr. Leichhardt's Carron. This notion was found to be incorrect, and it was named the Wills. The steamer, which was returning down the river to Sweer's Island, gave our boat a tow. We reached the Wills in 4 hours, after waiting the greater part of the day at the junction. The tide turned, and we traced the Wills 14 miles. Its width for some distance is about 40 yards, and the water of a considerable depth. The banks are low, and flooded during high tides. We had some difficulty in finding a dry spot for our encampment. The mosquitoes were so troublesome, that we could not eat our supper with any comfort. A more disagreeable spot could not be imagined even by the novelist who painted the American Eden.

24th.—Next day, 24th February, in the afternoon, the tide turned in our

favour, and we got up six miles. The Wills was there about 15 yards wide; its water was very shallow, and the banks so low, that we had to land several times before we found a spot sufficiently dry to encamp upon. During the night there was a thunder-storm, but fortunately for us it was not accompanied by rain.

25th.—This morning, the 25th, we started homeward bound. The mosquitoes were too troublesome to admit of our taking an early breakfast. With a strong tide in our favour, we reached the Norman River early in the afternoon, where we dined upon alligator eggs, having had the good fortune to get 43 in a newly-made heap of turf on the right bank of the Wills, about two miles from its junction with the Norman River. The eggs had a hard white shell; they were as large as those of geese, and I thought as delicate to the taste as those of hens. After waiting until near sunset, we got the tide in our favour, and our boat was pulled up to town in five hours.

27th.—This morning, the 27th, I accompanied Mr. Phillips across the Norman River from the township, which is situated on the south-west bank, and he went straight to one of his marked trees on the Wills, distant two miles. It was gratifying to ascertain that his dead-reckoning was so correct after having taken 400 different bearings.

March 10th.—I started with Mr. Phillips on the morning of the 10th March to explore the Gilbert River, and the coast to the northward as far as the Burke district extends. His men pulled our boat 25 miles down the Norman with the tide to the junction of the Wills. In the evening the schooner *Lily* passed up the river with a favourable breeze; from her we got a number of water-melons, which were grown in my garden in Sweer's Island. They were particularly acceptable to us, engaged as we were. The men pulled the greater part of the night, and early in the morning we reached Sea Reach, and landed on its right bank. The land is high, and the country good; it is thinly wooded with beautiful clumps of trees. The forenoon we spent in shooting pigeons and in eating wild fruit. The weather was showery, but fortunately for us it cleared up in the evening. This place has no name at present, but I have no doubt it is destined at some future time to be the site of a town. There is a fine view of the sea, and from the sea there is often a fresh breeze; it presents, in consequence, one of the most pleasant spots for a township that I have seen on the seaboard of the Gulf of Carpentaria. At one time it would have been chosen as a good place for a boiling-down establishment, but was rejected afterwards, as no water was to be had except by wells, of which there are several made by the Aborigines.

12th.—On the morning of the 12th March we went out to sea, but were becalmed off the Norman River estuary until noon. In the afternoon we had a light fair wind, and in the evening, after having been ashore at sunset, 2 miles north of the Gilbert, reached that river—the Gilbert—in 24 miles north of the Norman river. Last night there was a fine breeze, and we slept comfortably on the sandy beach, on the right (s.) bank of the Gilbert. It was hardly safe, I thought afterwards, to sleep so near the water, for in the morning we observed a large alligator swimming very near us.

13th.—The wind was so light this forenoon, that we did not reach the Vandiemian until the afternoon, although only six miles north of the Gilbert. We traced the Vandiemian $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and then were only half a mile south-east in a straight line, passing the heads. Mr. Phillips ascertained that the position of the entrance of the Vandiemian and its bends were exactly as laid down by Captain Stokes in 1842. After returning to the heads we pulled out to sea, and slept in the boat undisturbed by mosquitoes. The wind is very regular at this season of the year; judging from this and the last, it is easterly in the morning and north-westerly in the evening.

We started this morning, the 14th March, for the Gilbert river. We had rather too strong a breeze from the eastward, and our boat's mast was carried

away ; we soon, however, got into the Gilbert by means of the cars. Unfortunately we came away with an insufficient supply of rations, and we finished the last of our meat this morning, and had afterwards to content ourselves with only half a pound of bread each a day. With the last of the tide we got up the river six miles, then stopped until sunset ; afterwards we went up the river six miles further, and anchored. The mosquitoes were so troublesome that I for one could not sleep until near dawn. After breakfast on the 15th we got under weigh, with a strong tide in our favour. At two miles passed an island named by Mr. Phillips, Alpha : at half a mile higher reached another a mile long ; named it India Island. Above India Island there are well grassed plains, dotted at places with ant-mounds : some of these are 8 feet in height. At 20 miles from the entrance of the river we reached a place where the water is very shallow. At this the blacks had ganyahs on the south bank, and a fishing-weir stretched across the river. The ganyahs are well adapted for keeping out the mosquitoes, but must be very close. The opening to one is not more than 1 foot in diameter. The blacks ran away. At their camp we found fishing-lines, and the branches of the cabbage-palm, which they use as sun-shades. We robbed the blacks of nothing, but I am sorry to say that all explorers cannot say the same. Before crossing to the opposite side of the river to wait for ebb tide, we left the blacks a few trifling presents. When we were nearly ready to start down the river, a great number of blacks arrived ; fortunately they did not come sooner, as it is dangerous to have such wild people for any length of time at close quarters. They were probably some we had seen about four miles down the river near some fine water-holes on the south side of the river. Near these water-holes the blacks have made well-beaten paths. We had been firing our guns, which generally frighten blacks, even when not directed towards them ; but these did not seem to know what firearms were, as they came fearlessly to the same side of the river as that upon which we were. We started away slowly at first, and as many as a dozen of the blacks swam after the boat, and eat eagerly of a few crumbs of bread that we gave them. I have very little doubt of the Gilbert country being well watered. The cabbage-palm branches that we observed were probably obtained a short distance up the river ; and I have never seen these palms at Carpentaria, except in the bed of a river. Late in the evening we reached the heads, and pulled out a little way to anchor for the night. In doing this, we were followed out to sea by a large alligator, and when he came within a few yards of the boat Mr. Phillips shot at him. I have very little doubt, from the violent plunge that he made, that he was severely wounded.

As early as possible in the morning of the 16th we set sail for the Accident Inlet, distant 7 miles south. The wind was rather strong for our imperfectly repaired mast, and the oars had to be used again. We went ashore for breakfast on the northern side of the entrance to Accident Inlet. The entrance is wide, and the channel tolerably good. The beach is sandy, and a little above high-water mark there is a thin belt of Casuarina-trees, more commonly called oaks. This is, however, a very common feature all along the beach to the north of the Bynoe River. Under the oaks there were several blacks' gimyahs, as there were also on the north side of the Vandiemans ; they were made of boughs and grass, and resemble in form the old straw beehives. They are hardly 4 feet high. I may here mention that I have never seen any ganyahs like the two-storied ones noticed by Capt. Stabus and Dr. Leichhardt. I have seen, however, uncovered places on which the blacks sleep that were raised a little way off the ground, with fires all around to smoke the mosquitoes away.

A hundred yards back from the oaks there was a well grassed shallow watercourse, in which we found some water.

Accident Inlet in width is like all the other rivers of this district, inferior

to the Norman, but it is superior to the Gilbert; and again, the Gilbert is of a greater width than the Vandiemian. The latter, however, is one of the worst inlets in every way of the Burke district. We got up the Accident Inlet with a flowing tide 8 miles, and landed on the northern side, where there are cliffs of a shelly formation 20 feet high, and remained there until next morning. The country is very pretty, and very like that I have described on the bank of Seareach of the Norman River, but here and there more level, and subject to inundation at spring tides. During the day we employed ourselves in eating wild fruit, and in shooting cockatoos and pigeons.

Next morning, the 17th March, we had the tide again in our favour. As we ascended the river it became very narrow. At some parts down the river it was not far short of 300 yards in width, but at 20 miles from its confluence with the sea there were several islands as well as branches; the largest of the branches was only about 20 yards in width. At this place we stopped until near sunset. The country near the seaboard of Accident Inlet, like the Norman River, has high ridges on the southern side. The upper part of Accident Inlet country consists of well-grassed sparsely-wooded plains, with high ant-mounds, and watered by lagoons. The whole of the country being well adapted for stock between the Norman River and the Vandiemian will, I dare say, soon be occupied. It will be easily enclosed. The Gilbert we explored in a direct line 8 miles east, and Accident 7 miles in the same direction. A fence about 16 miles in length would enclose the country between the Norman and Accident Inlet, and another 8 miles in length would enclose that between Accident Inlet and the Gilbert. Whilst waiting for ebb tide to go down the river, we were surrounded by hostile blacks, armed with spears, &c., and a fowling-piece had to be discharged at them. This kept them off, and, as far as I am aware, did not seriously injure any of them. Just at this time the tide fortunately turned, and we left and went down the river. Had they only known it, they could have easily speared us without much risk to themselves from behind the mangroves on the edges of the river, as a black fellow can throw a spear with as much force and precision 15 yards as that of a ball from a pistol. After we started, they followed the boat for about a mile, but stopped doing so on seeing one of us lifting up a gun and holding it towards them. We got to the heads at 9 in the evening. The wind being fair, we thought of going to the Norman without delay, but the surf on the bar was too much for our boat, and we anchored until morning. Next day we reached the Norman, and sailed 15 miles up it to the junction of a creek on the same side (the north) as the Wills, and of nearly the same width, about 50 yards. This creek has not yet been explored.

March 19th. The men pulled the boat up to town, a distance of 35 miles; they were very tired, which is not surprising, as their allowance, as I have said before, of rations was a very small one; and in 10 days we had gone altogether 260 miles, over 180 of which they had pulled the boat. Ducks were abundant along the banks of the rivers, but there were two reasons against our shooting many of them: insufficient time and ammunition.

I have not said anything respecting the depth of the water in the rivers, for our crew being a small one, no person was regularly employed in sounding; but this perhaps is no great loss, as the good pastoral land does not extend far inland, and these rivers will not be much required unless the back country is rich in minerals. I have no doubt, however, that were the Gilbert and Accident rivers required, vessels of 6 feet draft might be employed in them.

Before concluding, I will say a few words about Sweer's Island—Carnarvon. The township of that beautiful spot is now in a fair way of becoming the seaport of Carpentaria. Its harbour has a favourable report from all the masters of vessels that have visited it; and what Captain Stokes said after making his survey more than 20 years ago, of Sweer's Island being the only

suitable seaport for the mainland of Carpentaria, is beginning now to be realised.

The island has been settled more than two years, and its climate, for a tropical one, has proved itself to be wonderfully healthy and pleasant, even to children.

W. LANDSBOROUGH.

2.—*Note relating to the French Expedition from Cambodia to Yunan.*

By W. H. MEDHURST, Esq., H.B.M. Consul, Hankow.

(Communicated by the INDIA OFFICE.)

I YESTERDAY had an interview with the Officer Commanding the French exploring expedition from Cochin China, the arrival of which at this port I reported in my letter dated the 6th instant. His name is François Garnier, and he styles himself "Lieutenant de vaisseau, chef de la Mission scientifique du Mekong." He was originally second in command, but his superior officer unfortunately died in Yunan. He did not seem inclined to be communicative as to the objects or results of the expedition, but he furnished me with the following particulars in regard to his route:—The mission, consisting of the Captain in command, himself, another Frenchman, and a small body of Cochin Chinese and Manilla men, left Saigon two years and five days ago, and proceeded up the Meh-kong, or Cambodia River, called by the Chinese San-toang-kiang. They ascended its stream until they reached Kiang-hung outside the border of Yunan Province, when they branched to the right, and passed, viâ Esmok, Puweh, and Yuen-Kiang, to Lin-gan-fu. Thence they travelled through Yunan-fu, the capital of the Province, to Tung-chuan, a town close to the bend of the Kin-sha-kiang or Yang-tsze-kiang, where it forms part of the northern boundary of Yunan. There the Captain in command was left, being too ill to proceed, and they then ascended the stream of the Kin-sha as far as Ta-li-fu, intending to revisit the Lan-tsang-kiang and explore its higher waters. But the Mahommedan rebels whom they found in possession of Ta-li-fu, and the neighbouring country, prevented them from carrying out this intention, and proved so generally hostile that they were compelled to retrace their steps to Tung-chuan, which they reached after two and a half months' absence. The Captain had meanwhile died; carrying his remains with them, they again started, and followed the downward course of the Kin-sha until they reached Hankow.

Lieutenant Garnier tells me that they experienced no molestation nor opposition worth mentioning, except from the Mahommedan rebels, as above mentioned; but that on the other hand, facilities were very grudgingly afforded them by the constituted authorities in those portions of China which they traversed. He describes the privations which the party suffered from time to time whilst threading the trackless forests and uninhabited tracts of country between China and the neighbouring States, as something very terrible, and he considers it very improbable that any considerable line of traffic could ever be established through that part of the frontier which he has had the opportunity of examining. The only information I could gather from Monsieur Garnier on the subject of the navigation of the Yangtsze was, that he considered the river easily navigable for steamers as far as Ma-hu-fu in Szechuen, and that its rapids were not by any means so formidable as those on the Meh-kong River.

He reports the greater part of Yunan and Szechuen (west) as being in a very disturbed state.

June 9, 1868.

W. H. MEDHURST.